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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 005288

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI)

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN MESSAGE NO. 170/01

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SUBJECT: POPE'S VISIT TO ARMENIA AND KAZAKHSTAN: VATICAN'S
GEOPOLITICAL/RELIGIOUS MANEUVERING

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR R. JAMES NICHOLSON FOR REASONS 1.5
(A) AND (D).

1.(C) SUMMARY: VATICAN OFFICIALS AND OBSERVERS DESCRIBE
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PAGE 02 VATICA 05288 01 OF 03 111456Z
POPE JOHN PAUL II'S SEPTEMBER 22-27 TRIP TO KAZAKHSTAN AND
ARMENIA AS SUCCESSFUL. THE VATICAN HAD THREE OBJECTIVES FOR
THIS TRIP: 1) CONTINUE THE PRESSURE ON THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH TO ALLOW A VISIT TO MOSCOW; 2) BOLSTER THE "MODERATE
ISLAMIC" GOVERNMENT IN KAZAKHSTAN AND HOLD IT UP AS AN
EXAMPLE; 3) INCREMENTALLY MOVE FORWARD THE DIALOG BETWEEN
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH
WHICH THE POPE HOPES WILL LEAD TO REUNIFICATION. END
SUMMARY

2.(C) EMBASSY OFFICERS MET WITH SEVERAL VATICAN OFFICIALS
AND OTHER DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS IN WAKE OF POPE JOHN PAUL
II'S VISIT TO KAZAKHSTAN AND ARMENIA SEPTEMBER 22-27.
VATICAN DIRECTOR FOR RUSSIA AND THE FORMER STATES OF THE
SOVIET UNION, ARCHBISHOP TRICARICO TOLD DCM THAT THE VISIT
WAS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN FURTHER ISOLATING RUSSIAN ORTHODOX
PATRIARCH ALEXI AND MAINTAINING PRESSURE TO PERMIT A VISIT
TO MOSCOW IN THE RELATIVELY NEAR FUTURE. TRICARICO SAID
THAT WITH THE VISIT TO KAZAKHSTAN, THE ANNOUNCED 2002 VISIT
TO BULGARIA, AND PROBABLE VISIT TO BELARUS, THE POPE WILL
HAVE "SURROUNDED" ALEXI. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE POPE WILL
HAVE SHOWN ALEXI THAT RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CLAIMS OF
TERRITORIAL-CANONICAL PREROGATIVES ARE MEANINGLESS IN THE
MODERN WORLD. IRONICALLY, ON OCTOBER 2, RUSSIAN EMBASSY TO
THE VATICAN DCM, DMITRI SHTODIN SECONDED THIS VIEW TO DCM.
SHTODIN SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS PUTTING "PRESSURE" ON
ALEXI TO INVITE THE POPE TO MOSCOW. HE NOTED THE RELATIVELY
MODERATE STATEMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX'S CHURCH
"MINISTER FOR FOREIGN RELATIONS" KYRIL CONCERNING THE POPE
VISIT TO KAZAKHSTAN AS AN INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS
HAVING AN INFLUENCE. (NOTE: THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DID
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PAGE 03 VATICA 05288 01 OF 03 111456Z
NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT THE POPE'S VISIT TO ARMENIA AS THE
ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC CHURCH IS NOT IN COMMUNION WITH THE
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND MOSCOW HAS NEVER CONSIDERED ARMENIA AS
BEING IN ITS CANONICAL TERRITORY). TRICARICO SAID THE POPE
DID NOT RAISE NAGORO/KARABACH WHILE IN YERAVAN. HOWEVER,
WHEN DCM POSED THE SAME QUESTION TO RUSSIAN DCM SHTODIN THE
REPLY WAS THAT HE HAD SEEN A REPORTING CABLE WHICH STATED
THE ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE ARMENIAN PRESIDENT.

3.(C) VATICAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER MIGLIORE (SEPTEL),
TOLD POLOFF AND DCM THAT THE VATICAN IS CONVINCED THAT THE
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX ARE FEELING THE PRESSURE, AND THAT A TRIP
TO MOSCOW IS NO LONGER AN UNREACHABLE GOAL. DCM ALSO MET
WITH FATHER GIOVANNI MATERA, THE RECTOR OF THE BASILICA OF
SAINT NICOLAS IN BARI, ON OCTOBER 8. ALTHOUGH A ROMAN
CATHOLIC CHURCH, BARI AND THE CHURCH ARE THE CENTER OF
RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH'S OFFICIAL REPRESENTATION TO ITALY
(HAVING REJECTED ROME BECAUSE OF THE POPE'S PRESENCE).
FATHER GIOVANNI SAID THAT THERE WILL BE A CATHOLIC/ORTHODOX
MEETING HOSTED BY THE BASILICA ON NOVEMBER 25 WHICH
METROPOLITAN KYRIL IS EXPECTED TO ATTEND; THE QUESTION OF
THE POPE'S VISIT TO MOSCOW IS ON THE AGENDA.

4.(C) COMMENT: IN ADDITION TO FURTHER ISOLATING PATRIARCH
ALEXI, THE VISIT TO KAZAKHSTAN WAS DESIGNED TO EXTOL
RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN A PROMINENTLY MUSLIM COUNTRY.
KAZAKHSTAN IS THE FIRST MUSLIM COUNTRY WHICH HAS CONCLUDED A
CONCORDAT (EG. A TREATY REGULATING RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF
THE CATHOLIC CHURCH) WITH THE VATICAN. THE VISIT TO
KAZAKHSTAN IS PART OF THE VATICAN'S AGENDA FOR THE POPE TO
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PAGE 04 VATICA 05288 01 OF 03 111456Z
VISIT MODERATE ISLAMIC COUNTRIES TO BOLSTER THEIR POPULARITY
IN THE FACE OF ISLAMIC EXTREMISM.

5.(C) COMMENT CONT'D: THE MAIN THRUST OF THE VISIT TO
ARMENIA WAS TO FURTHER THE PROCESS OF DIALOG BETWEEN THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE APOSTOLIC CATHOLIC CHURCH. A

SIDE BENEFIT WAS THE FACT THAT ARMENIA, BEING ANOTHER FORMER SOVIET REPUBLIC, WAS AN ADDITIONAL BLATANT REMINDER OF THE MOSCOW PATRIARCH'S OBSTINACY. THEOLOGICALLY, THE ROMAN CHURCH AND THE ARMENIAN CHURCH HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES IN ELIMINATING THEIR DIFFERENCES. THE REMAINING PROBLEMS INCLUDE THE ROLE OF THE POPE, AS WELL AS THE ARMENIAN CHURCH'S COMMUNION WITH THE COPTIC CHURCH WHICH WANTS TO GO MUCH MORE SLOWLY ON ANY DISCUSSIONS ON REUNIFICATION WITH

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